

# European Commission

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## Introduction

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you on behalf of the European Commission for inviting me to present the report on the activities of the European Union in the automobile safety sector. Since last ESV conference in Windsor three years ago, a number of important developments have occurred in the EC and at international level.

## The Accession to the UN-ECE Global Agreement

The European Community and its Member States have always been at the forefront of international harmonisation efforts, by actively supporting the work within the Revised 1958 Agreement of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) on international technical harmonisation in the motor vehicle sector.

Having become a Contracting Party to the Revised 1958 Agreement in March 1998, the Community consolidated the close links that already existed between the Directives of the European Community and UN/ECE Regulations in the field of motor vehicles. At the time of accession to the Agreement, the Community also acceded to 78 existing Regulations on technical requirements for motor vehicles. Most of these Regulations are considered equivalent to their corresponding Directives on EC type-approval. Accession to additional Regulations is currently under way.

In addition to the Revised 1958 Agreement, and further to the recommendations of the TABD (Trans Atlantic Business Dialogue), the European Community negotiated, through the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (commonly referred to as "WP.29") of the UN/ECE, a new agreement, known as "Parallel Agreement" or "Global Agreement", which came into force in August 2000.

Both Agreements have the same scope as far as the establishment of harmonised technical regulations on motor vehicles and parts is concerned, but the Parallel Agreement does not provide for the mutual recognition of approvals granted on the basis of the global technical regulations. With regard to the decision-making process, the Parallel Agreement is based on consensus as a general rule, and Regulations adopted under it do not have direct effect in the Contracting Parties' legal systems.

European Community rulemaking is necessary in the field of technical harmonisation, in order to guarantee a genuine functioning of the internal market. The significant benefits for industry arising from truly international standards (such as economies of scale or avoidance of duplication of testing procedures) outweigh the disadvantages resulting from the sometime elaborate harmonisation process.

## EC Type-Approval

As indicated during last ESV Conference, the EC type-approval became mandatory for all vehicles of the international category M1 on 1 January 1996, and from 1 January 1998 each car sold and registered in the European Union must have an EC Whole Vehicle Type-Approval (with exceptions for cars individually built or produced in small series). The EC Type-Approval procedure is currently under revision in order to extend the provisions of the EC Type-Approval to all other vehicle categories.

Mandatory EC whole vehicle type-approval for two and three-wheel vehicles came into force in June 1999.

The Council and the European Parliament have also decided upon technical requirements for EC type-approval for buses and coaches.

A proposal for a EC Directive on front underrun protection was approved by the Council and the European Parliament in spring 2000.

Keeping in mind the initial objective of achieving the internal market of the EC in the motor vehicles sector, the EC regulatory activities have to take into account new targets which are continuously set up in terms of safety and environment protection.

## The EC Road Safety Policy

More than 41 000 people were killed and 1.7 million injured on the European Union's roads last year. The most affected age bracket is that of the 14 to 25 years, for which road accidents represent the primary cause of death.

The Commission's current road safety priorities, contained in its recent Communication, stress the role that vehicle safety has played in reducing the risk of injury from accidents. The Commission will

encourage greater compliance with safe driving behaviour such as recommending maximum blood-alcohol levels and reinforcing the seat belt laws for all classes of motor vehicle and will furthermore require that children be secured in appropriate child restraints.

The Commission will also continue with its traditional legislative programme regarding the updating of the frontal and lateral collision directives, but also the carriage of dangerous goods, the provision of speed limitation devices for the lighter commercial vehicles and set minimum (but significant) driving licence and vehicle roadworthiness requirements.

The Commission is developing a new road safety action plan and the essential added value of this new programme will be the introduction of Community indicative road safety targets. One of the most important objectives, taking into account a realistic approach considering gradual road fatality reductions over time, would be a reduction in road deaths of one third by the year 2010.

In the meantime, we have to consider that there is a fast development taking place in automotive technology. The vehicle, especially the passenger car, is developing into a platform for advanced electronic systems, systems that control the vehicle's safety and environmental control functions. This technology is to be encouraged, as there is great potential for a substantial leap in road safety brought about by smart active and passive safety systems.

### **Pedestrian protection**

The principal requirements to lower the risk of injury or death in collisions between pedestrians (and cyclists) and cars have been basically understood for quite some time. It is estimated that 'pedestrian-friendly' car designs could avoid up to 2,100 of the annual 9,000 pedestrian and cyclist deaths (about 20% of traffic-related fatalities) that occur in the EU.<sup>1</sup> In addition, collisions with cars account for injuries to about 200,000 pedestrians each year. Other measures, such as lower speed limits, improved separation between traffic and pedestrians, etc, could also lead to substantial reductions in these figures.

The possibility of Community legislation aiming to ensure that car fronts are as "pedestrian friendly" as possible has been actively discussed since the mid 1990s. Most recently, Commission action in this field was presented in the Commission's

Communication on "Priorities in EU Road Safety" of March 2000.

A working document on pedestrian safety was submitted to the Commission's Motor Vehicle Working Group (MVWG) in 1996. This draft text was based on a proposal from the European Enhanced Vehicle-Safety Committee (EEVC). The MVWG recommended that a revised cost-benefit analysis be carried out before further work was undertaken.

Following the 1996 discussions and the overall cost-benefit analysis, the EEVC revised its report. Based on this new version of the EEVC's report presented in spring 1999, and on the MVWG's reactions, the Commission services have been preparing a proposal for a directive.

However, in the meantime, the European car industry (ACEA) approached the Commission to explore the possibility of an agreement on pedestrian-friendly cars based on a commitment by industry to guarantee that new vehicles meet certain technical criteria to ensure pedestrian safety. This agreement would be modelled on the existing agreement between ACEA and the Commission for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new passenger cars.

The major aim of a self-commitment would be to ensure that its technical content does achieve the necessary reductions in deaths and injuries. Consequently, the Commission Services will need to ensure that the voluntary commitment's technical contents are sufficiently robust so as to achieve the necessary road safety benefits and that it contains adequate controls to monitor the industry's compliance. Compliance would be checked by third party laboratories.

If industry is unable to come up with a satisfactory self-commitment, a more traditional, directive-based, solution will be proposed to the Commission. It is expected that the agreement with the car manufacturers should be achieved by mid 2001.

However, the Commission has decided that during this period work has to continue in parallel on a possible draft Directive. Thus the Commission will decide by mid-2001 either on the content of a self-commitment or on the provisions of a Directive.

### **Summary**

In summary, much of the work concerning motor vehicle safety within the European Community during the last three years has been focussed on reaching an international agreement covering

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<sup>1</sup> Study on Cost and Benefits of research into pedestrian protection, 28 April 1998, MIRA

initially the major world markets and eventually becoming truly global. This was materialised through the Global Agreement. Now its time to set priorities for the work within this agreement.

Other segments in the safety area concern the continuous development of the Community

strategy for improved road safety. Substantial resources have also been allocated to the development of pedestrian safety as well establishing type-approval requirements for two and three-wheel vehicles and for buses and coaches.